

Linda Clair
Seven-day Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2019
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 4b – Tuesday morning discussion

Question: I really don't like asking questions; it feels very unsafe and my heart is beating really fast. But I need to do it because I'm getting nervous from these questions in my mind. I've been meditating and doing retreats the last thirty years, but when I met you last year you really raised the bar, you gave me hope that I could actually reach liberation in this lifetime. Yesterday I was settling in here and thinking this is such a quieter life, I'm really enjoying it. Just thinking that has brought up a ton of questions, particularly having to do with being here and feeling I'm doing a lot of meditation and a little bit of token work. But at home I'm doing a little bit of token meditation and a lot of work – there is such a contrast. And my mind's telling me, "Now that the bar is raised, you've got to do more than you used to. You've got to do more than a retreat now and then and an hour of meditation in the morning." Because I'm more the over-achiever type and I work long hours, I'm wondering if one day I'm going to need to let go of all of that and give more hours in the day to meditate. I remember you said you were quite obsessed with liberation, towards the end, but there are other things that I want and enjoy in life as well. Will there be a time when I need to let go of all of that to reach what I want?

Linda: Yes, there will. It will gradually happen. It's very scary for over achievers to consider that there might come a time when you don't want to do what you're doing – you might even stop completely doing what you're doing.

Question: I don't know if I can.

Linda: Well, you can't right now. But part of this practice is gradually learning to let go. You can do it but you don't need to do it right now. It's not necessary to give up your work totally, but you do need to look at your priorities. If your priority is this, it doesn't mean you meditate ten hours a day. An hour and a half a day might be enough, and retreats in between.

But when you're not formally sitting you need to keep up the practice. Maybe not all the time but in little breaks that you have, because one can get into this incredible momentum, "I have to do this. This has to be perfect. I do this and that." To a degree – maybe not the degree that you are, or maybe in a different way – I was like that too. You end up scattering yourself very thinly over a range a stuff that you're doing pretty well, but not all that well because it's too scattered. You might be good at a lot of things and you're trying to do everything, but you need to actually start to simplify your life. I did that because I saw that I couldn't put most of my energy into *this* and then do all the other stuff that I felt I was good at.

It's still happening in me now: letting go of things, letting go of control, doing certain things to do with this – and trusting that it's okay. It is such an amazing thing to be able to do that but you need to do it gradually. *This* does starts to take over. And you need to want to do it, instead of me saying drop this, drop that. You're going to see that as some sort of discipline that I'm imposing on you.

You have to want to do it and gradually, gradually it does happen – but not until you see that it's driving you crazy, it makes you sick.

Question: The last few months I have wanted to slow down but somehow the work that I do – I can't blame the work but – it feels like either you do it or you don't. There are not a lot of avenues for doing less. I feel like I've been in a pressure cooker and I don't know the way out to do less but still continue doing what I'm doing. I'm at the point where something needs to give.

Linda: Yes, something needs to give, and something will give. It might even be your health, to force you. That's what often happens. If you don't voluntarily do it something stops you so you just can't do it, you can't keep going, and you have to surrender to that. I'm not saying it will be but it could be. But I know there are probably certain things in your life and your work that you can – from what you've said to me – that you can simplify and you don't need to be doing – it's just that you think you need to be doing them. Like providing for your retirement and building up and putting all this pressure on you to do that as well as your day-to-day work.

Question: Yes, I have to trust that the fear of letting go will abate and soften.

Linda: It will, but do it gradually. You can't do it all at once, it's too much, you need to do it gradually. You need to look at little habits in your life that contribute to this stress and momentum and pull back from them, change them. Don't do something that you habitually do, "Oh, I always do this. It all has to be perfect." Little things like making the bed – leave it! Things like that.

Question: I like a well-made bed. (laughter)

Linda: Maybe leave the bed and just look at it a bit messy and put up with that. But little things like that do build up, and you start to see that in your day there's all this stuff that has to be perfect and you have to do this and that, whereas – what the fuck, you don't care, it doesn't matter. (laughter)

Question: I was thinking of that book, the book with the orange cover, *The Subtle Art of Not Giving a Fck**. (laughter)

Linda: It is a practice. And it's not that you don't care about anything and you have to give everything up, but there are certain things that if you don't get done the worlds not going to end. Or if you don't get this or that, or something breaks – it happens. So don't try and be perfect.

Question: My mind's telling me that I have to become a contemplative, which I don't identify with at all.

Linda: Well, I didn't either. And I wasn't into communal living so I wasn't going to go into an ashram or anything like that. I didn't particularly want to go to India. I wasn't a typical spiritual person, I got dragged into it. Then eventually I met someone and it was, "Ah!" And then I jumped into it, that's all I wanted. But before then, I didn't have all these amazing things happen when I was a kid, I had no spiritual things happening. I wouldn't have called myself a spiritual person; I was just this ordinary person growing up.

So you don't have to be a certain person. You don't have to do anything. It's different for everyone. Some people do need it. I went into a monastery for a short time, that was just near the end, but

not everyone needs to do that, you don't have to. But whatever has happened in your life you did need. So don't regret anything.

Question: And there's no need to for myself, to be someone that I'm not. It will come naturally.

Linda: Yes, it will come naturally.

Now, I've got no idea what I was like. I thought I did. When people say, "What were you like," I really don't know and I don't care, it doesn't matter. I thought I was a certain person but I wasn't.

Before my Mum died we went through all this stuff with her – it was old things that mothers keep, reports and stuff. I was reading them going, "Ah, this is not who I thought I was. I thought I was a different person." I had this totally false memory of what actually happened but it was there in black and white so I couldn't dispute it. It was my personal interpretation of what happened and how I was. But I've got no idea how I was, who I was – it doesn't matter – and I still don't, in fact, less. I just accept now.

But I don't know, I don't know anything. I don't know who I am. I'm not this defined person who does this or that.

Question: Or put yourself into a box.

Linda: Yes, you stop putting yourself in this box, "I have to do this. I have to do that." And I'm still doing that, still letting go of stuff.

Question: This is less a question, rather there there's something going around in my head all the time. For the last couple of days I had a lot of pain. Yesterday it was really intense in my back. But then last night's sitting I was wriggling a bit and then thought, "Just sit with it," and it got really, really intense. But it was different: the pain was still there but there was sensations, like one on top of the other. At the end of the day I was exhausted. And I had this dream – I was initially surrounded by people and then alone, then I had to cross this ledge to go to sleep. It was indoors and high up – I'm very nervous with heights but if I wanted to sleep I had to go over this. I started to cross it and that was the end of it. This morning there were some thoughts and I kept coming back to the breath, and I felt quite different, there was no pain. Then at breakfast, as I was eating my breakfast and as I was eating it I thought, "This is the most exquisite thing I've ever eaten!" The taste was amazing! It was just toast and egg. It was just wow! Quite beautiful. The first part of the session I was going on about it. Then after the walking it did slow down a bit. At the end of the sit I thought, "I'm going to talk to Linda and tell her about it." Then I could separate a little bit from it.

Linda: Great. Thanks for telling me. That's beautiful. And it can always be beautiful, even if the egg's rotten. 😊

Question: The early morning sit was mostly just stillness and whiteness. It seemed like an absence of thought, though they were maybe going on in the background but not intruding on where I was. When I went for my morning walk afterwards, I don't seem to be reacting to thoughts anymore. They come through but there doesn't seem to be any (reaction.) I don't have to come down to the breath; I can if I want to. There doesn't seem to be any reaction to the thoughts.

Linda: Is that still happening through the sittings. (Yes.) Good. Keep an eye on the thoughts but it's more your reactions to them that's important. It's your reactions that feed them, that keep them going. What we're doing here is starving them eventually by not reacting. There might be a reaction that comes up again – don't worry about that – come back to your breath. And even when you're not reacting, I'd say, use your breath to ground you a bit more. At times let it go but make sure you're grounded so that you don't start to get a bit spacey.

Question: No, no, I still keep the awareness of the breath all the time. I don't come away from that.

Linda: Good. Very good.

Question: It's great, such a relief.

Linda: Good. So just keep watching. Stay open.

Question: Can you say a little more about something you mentioned yesterday. You mentioned that in getting past the mind, the intelligence comes in, and that's much faster than the mind. Can you tell us how you sense the presence of that intelligence and what does it do, or how do you deal with it, or how does it come to you?

Linda: It comes gradually. I started to notice it during sittings. I didn't notice it for quite a while but as I came more into my body, I noticed that when I was sitting I'd just spontaneously try different things. It was like something would take over, and I would just do what needed to be done.

Sometimes it felt there was this huge space and something would just appear and it would be obvious what to do. It's hard to explain but I just started to feel this intelligence. It was like a universal intelligence; it wasn't my personal intelligence. It was like my brain was just everything: it was containing this incredible universal intelligence, the intelligence that makes the trees grow – they don't think about growing – same with animals. It became much more animalistic and wild and spontaneous. It happened gradually. There are times where I just felt I was the whole universe. There was this incredible intelligence. It's impossible to describe. I felt overwhelmed by the whole thing – this tiny speck in this huge universe of intelligence.

Question: That resulted in action on your part?

Linda: Well, when I was sitting, yes, often that would just takeover. And to me just the fact that I was doing *this*, that was intelligent. To me it seemed like the most intelligent thing you could do in this life, to be free from your mind and tap into this universal intelligence.

Now, I don't even consider it, I don't think about it. Every movement is spontaneous, there's not this delay, "I think I'll do this now, or that now," it's just this-that. There's not thinking and then doing. There's not cause and then effect – there's just now, so there's not this fear about how I'm going to appear if I do something or say something. It's not there a hundred percent of the time, but ninety-nine-point-nine percent of the time.

Question: How did this relate to your experience of free will, or choosing at all?

Linda: Well, as the intelligence took over there was less and less free will. I recognised there was less and less because there was just this huge intelligence that was taking over. And my person will – what was that? That was usually the mind being wilful and trying to stop me and undermine me doing *this*.

There was something that really attracted me to *this*, and I can't say what that was. Sure, I worked really hard, I did this. But in the end I didn't question it and I knew I didn't have a choice. And when I realised I didn't have a choice that made it, not easier, but it took away that aspect. I didn't have to consider whether I was going to do this or not – it was obvious, I needed to do this, I had to do this, there was no question about it. So free will became something of the past. I was just taken over by it.

Question: Did that have any sense of compulsion about it? How would you describe having no choice?

Linda: It was wonderful, and it still is, because I still realise I have no choice – maybe in certain things like going to have something for lunch. Even then I really haven't got much choice – I just eat it or I don't – but I don't think about it. I don't think that I have this choice and I don't spend my time before I do something thinking I can choose this or that. I look, and I just take this or that, and that's how it is.

You think you've got some sort of control over everything; you've got no control. You don't know when you're going to die. You can make yourself incredibly healthy and that might help you feel good while you're living – and I'm not saying you shouldn't do that, I try and do that – but I've got no illusions that I've got any say in when I'm going to die.

Question: I'm assuming you're against suicide?

Linda: I don't think it's going to help. It's not that I'm against it. I wouldn't suggest it to anyone. I've never felt suicidal. If I was in extreme pain and I knew it wasn't going to get better... But it's not going to end your mental suffering. Maybe temporarily but then you have to come back to sort it all out. But if I was extreme pain and there wasn't any prospect of getting better, I wouldn't mind a bit of assistance. You really don't know until you're in that position. That's the thing, you just don't know. And that's what this is all about, accepting, "I don't know, I really don't know." And you give up trying to know, trying to figure out, trying to understand anything – it's just how it is. The only thing we know is that one day we're all going to die – the only known.

Question: Is there any guide as to how much you should be doing in a day? I feel that sense of self-inflicted pressure to do a lot of things each day. But at the same time I feel there are things I want to do as well. I enjoy it but also have that sense of pressure.

Linda: And if you don't do them there'll probably be pressure too. It's up to you; I can't tell you how much to do. Put this first, and then with other things maybe put them in priority of importance, and sometime you're going to have to drop something and just go, "Okay, I can't do that today," and do your best to let it go. But I know you're a bit of a perfectionist and you're good at a lot of things so you want to do a lot of things. And you're young and you want to experience things, but just pace yourself a bit, try and pace yourself.

Question: Relating to that subject of doing things, I'm realising that during this time here now that all these thoughts are driven by fear, and it takes a lot of energy. A while ago I asked you about getting into such an anxiety, and talked to you individually. You gave me such good input about just keeping it simple. You said, "Don't worry, drink a cup of tea, go back, take a breath." It was a breakthrough for me because I realised how complicated everything gets in the heat of things and how much energy it uses. Now I'm feeling it's all this fear underneath driving it. It's an absolutely useless waste of energy!

Linda: It is.

Question: It's related to this doing things, doing this and doing that. Underneath it's just this fear-driven thing rather than the real intelligence you were talking about where things get very simple. I do have experiences of that and I'm going, "Why it can't be like this all the time?!"

Linda: Well it can be, but you have to practice being simple, letting go, letting go of your thoughts, simplifying things, breaking that momentum of thinking. Having breaks is really important. That's what I used to find quite difficult, stopping that, "I've got to do this, and I've got to do that." But you just stop.

And you can be just as creative sitting there doing nothing. I'm really good at that now, just sitting not doing anything, whereas before I'd be sitting, "Oh yes, that needs to be done, that needs to be done," and it doesn't really. The world's not going to fall apart if you don't do most of the stuff that you think needs doing.

Question: I find that lives become so juicy and complicated and more desirable. 😊 Where I grew up in Germany it was a dark environment and there wasn't much to do, and I did a lot of thinking. And I did have this intelligence a bit more than I feel now.

Linda: So you blame Australia? Our weather is too nice? (laughing)

Question: It's too beautiful... beaches... coffee shops. (laughing) But it did help me: you're forced to think, you're forced to sit with yourself. And I'm grateful for that because I made good decisions. But here I've become a fuss-pot.

Linda: When you're here all that stuff is going to be highlighted, you're going to be more aware of all that stuff coming up. So just seeing it and doing your best to come back into your body. And it won't be easy, it will be hard work. It will take a different kind of energy. The energy changes from that pointless energy that's just going round and round in circles to a more creative energy. That's what happens with the energy, you come in touch with that creative energy.